

Message Text

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TAGS: SOPN, XA, CU

SUBJECT: TEXT OF NOON BRIEFING: 3/16/78

Q. WELL, ARE YOU DEALING WITH SOMALIA?

A. YES. I SAY, ANY QUESTIONS ON THAT, AND THEN I HAVE
SOME OTHER THINGS.

Q. HAVE YOU HAD ANY INDICATIONS, HODDING, FROM THE SOVIETS
THAT IN FACT THEY HAVE NO INTENTION OF FACILITATING THE
WITHDRAWAL OF CUBAN FORCES THAT ARE IN ETHIOPIA?

A. WE HAVE HAD A NUMBER OF CONVERSATIONS WITH THE SOVIET
UNION AND I AM NOT GOING TO GO INTO THE DETAILS OF THE
CONVERSATIONS. THEY HAVE PUBLICLY EXPRESSED THEMSELVES ON
THE SUBJECT OF THEIR PRESENCE THERE, AND WE HAVE PUBLICLY
EXPRESSED OURSELVES ON OUR FEELING ABOUT IT. I THINK THAT
IS ABOUT AS FAR AS I AM ABLE TO GO.

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Q. DOES THE STATE DEPARTMENT STAND ON THE FACT THAT WE
HAVE HAD ASSURANCES THAT THERE WOULD BE -- FROM THE SOVIETS
THAT THERE WOULD BE WITHDRAWALS OF CUBAN FORCES?

A. I DON'T RECALL THE STATE DEPARTMENT SAYING THAT.

Q. CAN WE PUT IT THIS WAY, HODDING? TWO DOZEN REPORTERS
LEARNED SIMULTANEOUSLY FRIDAY NIGHT THAT THE SOVIETS HAD
GIVEN INDICATIONS, AND THE ACCOUNT IN THE NEW YORK TIMES
THIS MORNING MAY HAVE OVERSTATED-- AT LEAST IT OVERSTATES

WHAT I THINK WE ALL LEARNED SIMULTANEOUSLY, AND WHAT WE SIMULTANEOUSLY LEARNED IS THAT THERE HAVE BEEN INDICATIONS THAT THE SOVIET UNION WOULD WITHDRAW, WOULD INFLUENCE THEM. AT THE SAME TIME, ALL THESE REPORTERS LEARNED THAT A THOUSAND MORE CUBANS HAVE PILED INTO SOMALIA.

SO, WITHOUT TRYING TO CHECK THE STATUS AGAINST ONE NEWS-PAPER'S ACCOUNT, LET'S PUT ASIDE THE NEW YORK TIMES TODAY AND JUST ASK YOU, FIVE DAYS OR SIX DAYS AFTER WE ALL LEARNED THIS, CAN YOU BRING US UP-TO-DATE ON THE CUBAN STRENGTH IN ETHIOPIA, AND WHETHER THE RUSSIANS ARE USING THEIR INFLUENCE TO TRY TO GET THE CUBANS TO COME OUT?

A. I CAN TELL YOU THAT SIX DAYS LATER, THE CUBAN PRESENCE -- AND I AM NOT GOING TO BE ABLE TO GIVE NUMBERS -- IS NOT LESS, AND IT IS PROBABLY SOMEWHAT GREATER. THAT IS THE BEST ANSWER I CAN GIVE YOU.

Q. DO YOU STILL HAVE INDICATIONS OR DO YOU HAVE INDICATIONS, CONTINUING INDICATIONS, THAT THE SOVIETS WILL TRY TO PERSUADE THE CUBANS TO BRING SOME OF THOSE PEOPLE OUT?

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A. WE HAVE CONTINUING CONVERSATIONS WITH THE SOVIET UNION ON THIS SUBJECT, AND THAT CONVERSATION IS ON-GOING. I AM NOT GOING TO BE ABLE TO CHARACTERIZE IT.

Q. HODDING, BACK SOMEWHERE ALONG THE WAY, THE UNITED STATES TENTATIVELY SAID IT WOULD SUPPLY DEFENSIVE ARMS TO SOMALIA AND THEN SUSPENDED THAT OFFER IN THE LIGHT OF SUBSEQUENT EVENTS.

DOES DICK MOOSE PLAN TO NOW DISCUSS DELIVERY OF DEFENSIVE WEAPONS TO SOMALIA?

A. HE WILL DISCUSS THE ENTIRE RANGE OF ISSUES, MANY OF WHICH WERE OUTLINED BY THE PRESIDENT IN HIS STATEMENT, AND CERTAINLY INCLUDING THAT POSSIBILITY AS AMONG THEM.

Q. HODDING, DOES THE UNITED STATES HAVE ANY LESS EXPECTATION NOW THAN IT DID LAST WEEK ABOUT THE LIKELIHOOD OF THE CUBAN PRESENCE IN ETHIOPIA TO BE REDUCED NOW THAT THE SOMALIAN WITHDRAWAL HAS TAKEN PLACE?

A. I DO NOT HAVE ANYTHING THAT I CAN OFFER YOU ON THAT AT THIS TIME. I DO NOT HAVE AN INFORMED GUESS TO GIVE YOU.

Q. THE SECRETARY, I BELIEVE, IS HAVING LUNCH WITH THE SOVIET AMBASSADOR TODAY, IS HE NOT?

A. YES. HE HAS LUNCH ON HIS CALENDAR.

Q. WILL YOU BE IN A POSITION TO DISCUSS THAT WITH US
AFTERWARDS?

A. I DON'T KNOW, MURREY.

Q. WILL YOU ATTEMPT TO?

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A. YES.

Q. IN THE PAST SIX DAYS, HAVE ANY SHIPS PUT TO SEA? IF
YOU WILL RECALL, SIX DAYS AGO THERE WERE REPORTS OF
SHIPS BEARING UNKNOWN NUMBERS OF CUBANS, WHICH PRESUMABLY
ACCOUNT FOR YOUR SAYING THAT IT IS PROBABLY LARGER. HAVE
THERE BEEN ANY NEW SHIPMENTS?

A. I AM NOT AWARE OF SHIPS.

Q. HODDING, DO YOU HAVE ANY EVIDENCE THAT THE CUBANS IN
ETHIOPIA HAVE TURNED THEIR MILITARY MIGHT AGAINST THE
ERITREANS OR AGAINST ANY OTHER GROUP THAT IS IN COMBAT
INSIDE ETHIOPIA?

A. WHAT I KNOW IS, FRANKLY, WHAT I SEE ON THE WIRE,
THAT THAT POSSIBILITY EXISTS. I HAVE SEEN IT REPORTED FROM
THEM. I DO NOT KNOW THAT BY INDEPENDENT MEANS AVAILABLE TO
ME.

Q. IS THERE STILL AN AIRLIFT OF EQUIPMENT FROM THE SOVIET
UNION GOING INTO ETHIOPIA?

A. I HONESTLY DON'T KNOW. I WILL TAKE THE QUESTION. I
HAVE NOT BEEN AWARE OF SUCH A THING.

BUT, WAIT, LET ME STRIKE THAT. I AM JUST NOT SURE. I WILL
TAKE THE QUESTION.

Q. COULD YOU FIND OUT WHEN IT STOPS?

Q. HODDING, IT WAS SAID HERE THURSDAY NIGHT ON THE PUBLIC
RECORD FOR DIRECT QUOTATION BY SENIOR U.S. OFFICIALS THAT
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THE UNITED STATES WOULD BE WATCHING FOR A SIGN OF SOVIET-

CUBAN INTENTIONS, SPECIFICALLY ON WHETHER THERE WOULD BE ANY
REINFORCEMENTS GOING INTO ETHIOPIA OF CUBAN TROOPS.

NOW, THE PROBLEM THAT IS DANGLING HERE IS WHETHER THE AUGMENTATION OF CUBAN TROOPS THAT HAS NOW TAKEN PLACE TO WHICH YOU REFER IS SOMETHING THAT WAS ON THE WAY PREVIOUSLY WHICH THE UNITED STATES EXPECTED TO BE ARRESTED, OR IF IT IS SOME NEW AUGMENTATION THAT WAS NOT KNOWN ABOUT AT THE TIME THE FIGHTING STOPPED?

A. YES. ONE, OF COURSE, I THINK EVEN THAT WELL-KNOWN ANNOUNCER OF THE WAR'S END, ME, SAID SOMETHING ABOUT THAT WITHIN THE LAST 36 HOURS. TWO, I AM SIMPLY NOT SURE THAT I AM GOING TO BE ABLE TO ANSWER THAT QUESTION, MURREY. I AM PRETTY SURE I WOULDN'T BE ABLE TO GIVE YOU ANYTHING THAT IS ACCURATE ENOUGH TO PUT THAT KIND OF QUESTION EITHER TO REST OR TO ANSWER IT ADEQUATELY. I JUST DON'T THINK I CAN DO IT.

Q. HODDING, DO YOU KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT THE SOVIET TROOPS THERE, AND ALSO DO YOU KNOW WHAT THE CUBAN TROOPS ARE DOING IN SOMALIA?

A. IN SOMALIA?

Q. IN ETHIOPIA, SORRY. WHAT ARE THEY DOING THERE NOW?

A. WE DON'T HAVE ANYBODY ON THE GROUND THERE LOOKING AT THEM. I DON'T HAVE A BATTLEFIELD REPORT FOR YOU. THE SOVIET PRESENCE IS, AS I UNDERSTAND IT, ROUGHLY THE SAME.

LET ME SAY THAT MY ANSWER ABOUT THE CUBANS -- BEFORE I SEE SOME LEAD ON THIS -- WAS FAIRLY QUALIFIED. I SAID UNCLASSIFIED

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THAT I DID NOT HAVE ANY REASON TO BELIEVE THAT THERE ARE ANY LESS AND THAT THERE MAY BE MORE. I AM NOT NOW GIVING YOU THE NOTION OF THOUSANDS AND THOUSANDS INCREASE. I WAS TRYING TO DEAL WITH THE OTHER SIDE OF THE QUESTION, WHICH WAS A REDUCTION.

Q. MOSCOW RADIO SAID TODAY THAT SOMALI LEADERS HAVE FAILED TO SHOW READINESS TO GIVE UP THEIR TERRITORIAL CLAIMS TO ETHIOPIA OR TO KENYA AND DJIBOUTI. HAVE YOU ANYTHING MORE ON WHETHER SIAD BARRE HAS ASSURED THE UNITED STATES THAT HE IS GIVING UP HIS CLAIMS?

A. I AM CONFIDENT THAT THE SUBJECT IS GOING TO BE AMONG THOSE DISCUSSED.

Q. HODDING, GIVEN THE PRESIDENT OF ANGOLA WHERE THE CUBANS SAID ONE TIME IN A FAMOUS LETTER TO OLAF PALME THAT THEY WERE PULLING OUT, AND THERE ARE MORE THERE NOW THAN

BEFORE. ARE YOU CONFIDENT, OR DO YOU HAVE ANY COMMITMENTS AT ALL FROM THE CUBANS THAT THEY WILL NOT STAY IN ETHIOPIA?

A. WE HAVE BEEN IN CONTACT WITH THE CUBANS. WE HAVE HAD DISCUSSIONS WITH THEM. I AM NOT GOING TO CHARACTERIZE WHAT THOSE DISCUSSIONS HAVE INCLUDED.

Q. IS THE UNITED STATES INSISTING ON A COMPLETE WITHDRAWAL OF CUBAN FORCES, OR IS THERE A LEVEL OF CUBAN TROOPS TO WHICH THE UNITED STATES WOULD NOT OBJECT?

A. I THINK OUR FORMULATION IS THE WITHDRAWAL OF OUTSIDE FIGHTING FORCES, AND THAT THIS IS CLEAR. I DON'T THINK THERE IS ANY QUALIFIER ON IT.

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Q. HODDING, IN LIGHT OF THE FACT THAT THE UNITED STATES IS NOW RECONSIDERING ITS POSITION ON THE SUPPLY OF DEFENSIVE WEAPONS TO SOMALIA, DOES THAT ALSO MEAN THAT THE UNITED STATES HAS CHANGED ITS POLICY ON THE SUPPLY OF WEAPONS FROM OTHER COUNTRIES IN THE REGION THAT MIGHT BE INCLINED TO SEND THEM?

A. I BELIEVE THE STATEMENT YESTERDAY SAID THAT ASSUMING CERTAIN CONDITIONS WERE MET THAT WE WOULD ALSO SEE WHAT WE COULD DO TO HELP THEM FIND ASSISTANCE FROM OTHER COUNTRIES AS WELL -- ASSUMING THE CONDITIONS WERE MET THAT I OUTLINED AND ON WHICH THE PRESIDENT WAS EVEN MORE EXPLICIT THAN I WAS YESTERDAY.

Q. HODDING, IS IT THE DEPARTMENT'S POSITION THAT THE SOVIETS AND CUBANS SHOULD WITHDRAW BASED SIMPLY ON THE SOMALI WITHDRAWAL, OR IS THE JUSTIFICATION FOR THE WITHDRAWAL CONTINGENT AT LEAST PARTIALLY ON THEIR RENUNCIATION OF TERRITORIAL CLAIMS?

A. WE HAVE SUGGESTED, OF COURSE, THAT THAT RENUNCIATION, WE THINK, IS A NECESSARY COMPONENT OF A LASTING PEACEFUL SOLUTION THERE. THE JUSTIFICATION USED BY THE SOVIETS AND THE CUBANS FOR A PRESENCE THERE WAS THAT THEY WERE THERE TO REPEL AGGRESSION FROM OUTSIDE FORCES. THAT HAVING ENDED, THE JUSTIFICATION IS ENDED THAT THEY CLAIM FOR THEMSELVES.

(EMMICK, PART OF BRIEFING)

Q. ON HUMAN RIGHTS, HODDING, TWO DAYS AGO FRANK EMMICK, AN AMERICAN BUSINESSMAN WHO SPENT 14 YEARS IN PRISON IN CUBA

AND WAS RELEASED, MADE HIS FIRST PUBLIC STATEMENT SINCE HE RETURNED, DESCRIBING IN GRUESOME DETAIL THE CONDITIONS UNDER WHICH HE AND OTHER PRISONERS LIVE IN CUBA OR

WERE INCARCERATED IN CUBA. HE ALSO GAVE SOME ESTIMATES
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OF THE NUMBER OF POLITICAL PRISONERS IN CUBA THAT ARE
SUBSTANTIALLY LARGER THAN THOSE THAT ARE BEING COMMONLY
USED.

MR. EMMICK STATED THAT THE STATE DEPARTMENT DID NOT TALK
TO HIM AND MADE NO EFFORT TO TALK TO HIM AND GET THE INFOR-
MATION THAT HE HAD.

FOR TWO DAYS I'VE BEEN TRYING TO REACH MARK SCHNEIDER TO
FIND OUT WHY. NOW, I WOULD LIKE TO KNOW, WHY IS MR.
SCHNEIDER SO BUSY THAT HE'S UNABLE TO RETURN PHONE CALLS?
AND IS IT TRUE, AND WHY IS IT TRUE, THAT THE STATE
DEPARTMENT WOULD NOT BE INTERESTED IN INVESTIGATING
MR. EMMICK'S FIRSTHAND ACCOUNT OF THE CONDITION IN WHICH
POLITICAL PRISONERS ARE HELD IN CUBA, INCLUDING -- I THINK
HE SAID -- FIVE OTHER AMERICANS.

A. ON THE FIRST QUESTION, QUITE FRANKLY, THAT'S NOT MY
BUSINESS AND YOU CAN KEEP TRYING. I WILL SPEAK TO HIM AND
ASK HIM, BUT I'M NOT GOING TO RELAY AN ANSWER TO YOU.
PEOPLE ARE BUSY AND PEOPLE AREN'T BUSY. I HAVE NO IDEA.

Q. IS HE ENGAGED IN SOME SPECIAL MISSION OF HUMAN RIGHTS
THAT --

A. YOU KNOW, FRANKLY, I NEITHER HAVE TO ANSWER THE QUESTION
NOR TO RELAY IT. THAT'S A PROBLEM FOR YOU AND HIM.

NOW, LET ME DEAL WITH THE QUESTION THAT I CAN DEAL WITH, THE
QUESTION OF MR. EMMICK BEING INTERVIEWED BY STATE DEPARTMENT
PEOPLE.

I WILL WANT TO TAKE THAT QUESTION. I DON'T KNOW THE ANSWER
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TO IT.

I READ ONE ACCOUNT, AND I THOUGHT HE HAD SAID THAT HE WAS
WASN'T GOING TO SAY -- OR WORDS TO THAT EFFECT.

Q. BUT PRIVATELY, AFTER, HE TOLD ME THAT HE HADN'T WRITTEN
AN ANSWER ON IT YET.

A. YES. I'M SORRY, BECAUSE THAT'S THE ONLY THING I HAD TO
DEAL WITH; BUT I'LL RAISE THE QUESTION AND GET AN ANSWER
FOR YOU.
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